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RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0146  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1231  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3272  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2658  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BISHKEK 000150

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ NOTIFY EMBASSY OF NULLIFICATION OF MANAS  
BASE AGREEMENT -- AND URGE IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS ON MANAS

REF: A. BISHKEK 146

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 145

[1](#)C. BISHKEK 135

[1](#)D. BISHKEK 96

[1](#)E. BISHKEK 62

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On February 20, President Bakiyev signed the law terminating the 2001 U.S.-Kyrgyz agreement on Manas Air Base, and Foreign Minister Sarbayev delivered to the Ambassador official notification of the decision to terminate the agreement. Sarbayev expressed regret at the "misunderstanding" on the Kyrgyz side of the Petraeus visit (Ref E) and the "trickery" of the Russians which had brought matters to such a pass. However, he reiterated Presidential Chief of Staff Usenov's earlier admonition that this was just a signal to begin "serious negotiations" over the future of Manas. He said the Kyrgyz side is still examining the offer presented to it by the Ambassador and hoped the U.S. side was doing the same with Usenov's counter-offer. Asked bluntly by the Ambassador if he thought the Kyrgyz could hang on to the promised Russian billions and keep Manas open, he replied in the affirmative. Asked even more directly if it would be worthwhile for an American team to come out for a negotiation, Sarbayev urged in the most emphatic terms for one to come out ASAP. End Summary.

2001 Agreement Nullified

[1](#)2. (U) On February 20, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev signed the law, passed by Parliament the day before (Ref B), to terminate the 2001 Manas Air Base agreement. The Manas Air Base agreement was effected in December 2001 by an

exchange of diplomatic notes, which was subsequently ratified by the Kyrgyz Parliament. Under the terms of the agreement, either party could terminate the agreement "on 180 days written notice through the diplomatic channels."

13. (C) The Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev subsequent to Bakiyev's actions. Sarbayev delivered the official notification of termination of the 2001 agreement (scanned copy of Kyrgyz Note No. 011-11/273 e-mailed to SCA/CEN). By the Embassy's calculation, 180 days will expire August 19. When the Ambassador informed Sarbayev of this, he looked surprised, and said in an off-hand fashion, "We haven't been looking so far ahead."

#### Kyrgyz Misunderstanding and Russian Trickery

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14. (C) Sarbayev then asked the Ambassador how much time she had for their encounter, and reassured that he was her top priority, settled into an hour-plus meeting that veered from the pointedly cordial, to the plaintive, and eventually to the blithely hopeful. Sarbayev began by expressing regret at the "misunderstanding" on the Kyrgyz side of the January Petraeus visit. While acknowledging that Petraeus had stated that a CENTCOM team would most likely come in February to examine ways in which Manas Air Base could bring more benefits to Kyrgyzstan, Sarbayev said that the Kyrgyz MFA (he was not yet Foreign Minister) and other members of the Kyrgyz government had failed to focus on this hopeful sign. Instead, they had focused on his quip that discussions surrounding closing the Base were a form of "Central Asian negotiation." Blinded by their hurt at this slight, they had failed to respond in an adequate manner to this valuable

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American signal. He implied that this had made them ripe for Russian influence on closing the Base.

15. (C) Adding insult to injury was the behavior of the Russians. Sarbayev readily acknowledged that Bakiyev's announcement of closing the Base at a Moscow press conference was "an embarrassment for the country." He claimed that in the airplane carrying him to Russia, Bakiyev had sought assurances that no questions about the Base would be asked of him in public. The Russians had assured him of this. Instead, Sarbayev said that they had resorted to "trickery," planting such a question, thus ensuring that Bakiyev was publicly wedded to what was still not a 100% done deal.

16. (C) While thus acknowledging that matters had come to a regrettable pass over Manas due to Kyrgyz and Russian negative actions, he also raised "years of neglect from the American side." When he raised the killing of Kyrgyz truck driver Ivanov yet again, the Ambassador reiterated our desire to send a team out or interview Kyrgyz witnesses to the killing by VTC at Manas Air Base to speed along the enquiry. Sarbayev immediately stated that the Kyrgyz would welcome either variant, "as a sign of how much we still want to cooperate with you."

#### Let's Now Begin "Serious Negotiations"

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17. (C) The Ambassador told Sarbayev that the USG had not made any decision yet on Manas. We were reviewing the situation and our options. The matter was being discussed at the highest levels. She reminded him of the Obama Administration's desire to put Kyrgyz-American -- and Russian-American -- relations on a new footing and regretted rash actions that could complicate relations down the line.

18. (C) The Ambassador then reminded Sarbayev of Presidential Chief of Staff Daniyar Usenov's earlier statement to her that delivery of the note abrogating the Manas Base agreement should be interpreted by the U.S. side as the signal to begin "serious negotiations" over the future of the Base and asked

if this was still operative (Ref D). Sarbayev replied in the affirmative, characterizing the formal notification process as "just playing the game." He stated that the Kyrgyz side is still examining the offer presented to it by the Ambassador -- despite Usenov having previously characterized it to the Ambassador as unacceptably small. He also expressed the hope that the U.S. side was still looking at Usenov's counter-proposal. The Ambassador assured him that we were studying the Kyrgyz proposal as well as other options.

#### Two-Timing

¶9. (C) The Ambassador then asked Sarbayev bluntly if he thought the Kyrgyz could hang on to the promised Russian billions and keep Manas open. If not, would the Kyrgyz negotiate with the U.S. in good faith or would their demands be unacceptable? Sarbayev replied immediately in the affirmative. He then went painstakingly through the Russian money, which he mainly characterized as "old promises from years ago": \$300 million in loans which would go immediately into the government budget to stabilize it and prevent inflation; \$193 million in loan forgiveness owed since the break-up of the Soviet Union; and \$1.7 billion for Kambarata-1 -- which amazingly, he emphasized would be open to building by Western firms. He bemoaned that more American

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firms had not expressed interest in working on it. Told by the Ambassador that AES had called on her yesterday and had expressed interest in some energy work in Kyrgyzstan, he exclaimed: "By all means, encourage them to bid on work at Kambarata!"

¶10. (C) Sarbayev stated that the only "new" money was the \$150 million Russian grant that had been wheedled out of them by the Kyrgyz -- by shaming them with a comparison to China. He described how Kyrgyz negotiators had told the Russians that the Chinese give them "at least" \$7 million in grants per year. They had completely renovated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for free in 2007 and had even thrown in an additional \$50 million grant. He also claimed that Chinese-Kyrgyz trade amounted to \$8-9 billion per year (while the Chinese Ambassador recently told the Ambassador \$3 billion. Ref C.) The Kyrgyz tactic vis-a-vis the Russians had thus been to say: "Look, you are our brothers, you are our neighbors, we have a common language and history and you can't even give us a fraction of what the foreign Chinese are giving us!" According to him, the \$150 million was the Russians' answer. "They told us: see, the Chinese nickel-and-dime you with \$7 million per year but we'll give you a big round sum right away!"

¶11. (C) Sarbayev thus reiterated that he was confident that the Kyrgyz could keep the Russian money regardless of a possible deal with the USG on Manas (Usenov had previously said the same thing). Sarbayev said that the "old money" would be forthcoming because "Putin is a man of his word" and the grant because of Russian shame. In any case, all of the money had now been confirmed by acts of Parliament in both states. When pressed, he admitted that "of course there are always doubts, but all the paperwork is signed."

¶12. (C) Sarbayev then said that the Kyrgyz had been watching with some trepidation as it appeared to them that the Russians and the Americans had been negotiating over Manas during high-level encounters "over our heads." He asked what had been the result of these negotiations. The Ambassador stated that the Russians had emphasized their desire to be helpful to the U.S. in its fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. She added that they had categorically denied Kyrgyz allegations that they were pressuring the Kyrgyz to close Manas. Visibly non-plussed, the Foreign Minister stated: "They can say what they want, but we have the documents!" Asked to elaborate, he would only cite the 2005

SCO demand that Manas be closed, "which we resisted courageously for four years!"

Is It Worthwhile for a Team to Come Out -- YES!

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¶13. (C) The Ambassador then asked Sarbayev even more bluntly if he could give her his personal assurance that if the decision were made in Washington to send a negotiating team out, it would be worth its while to do so. She said that if a team were to come out, it would be a serious one, which would expect constructive proposals from the Kyrgyz side. Sarbayev said in the most emphatic terms that a team should come out ASAP. He urged that it be a high-level one, with the authority to negotiate and sign an agreement and agree on price. He hinted that another proposal might be made by the Kyrgyz, to somehow "re-christen" the Base, to make it sound less an American installation, while not hindering its operational effectiveness.

¶14. (C) The meeting ended on a note of great cordiality.

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Sarbayev stressed that even if for some reason the two sides did not come to terms on a new Base agreement; "We want to be your friends and allies more than ever. We want to fight terrorism together even more effectively than before!"

Comment

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¶15. (C) FM Sarbayev's version of the events leading up to Bakiyev's Moscow announcement strains credibility, even in the context of "Central Asian negotiations." Nevertheless, his message was clear: the Kyrgyz remain open and even eager for negotiations on the Base.

¶16. (C) The Embassy does not intend to issue a press statement acknowledging receipt of the notification, but will confirm receipt of the Kyrgyz note in response to any press inquiries.  
GFOELLER